



## 451<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group Newsletter No. 3 January 2014



Published by Winson Jones for the preservation of our 451<sup>st</sup> heritage. Printing and mailing of the Newsletter is funded solely by donation which should be mailed to:

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### 2013 TEMPE REUNION UPDATE

Wow! Our Joint Reunion held at Tempe, Arizona in October exceeded our expectations. Total attendance numbered 140 plus, including 31 survivors of the Air War in Europe. Our 451<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group had 80 people registered of which 18 were WWII survivors. We had three people attend (Bobbi Kelly, Ralph Helmericks and A. Mike Stauth) who have a perfect attendance record covering the 17 Reunions held to date by our Bomb Group. In recognition of the strong support over the years of Bobbi Kelly and her family members, a special award was made to Bobbi—a silver pendant and necklace which we hope will serve to remind Bobbi of the special role she has played in our activities. Truly a person we all love and respect.

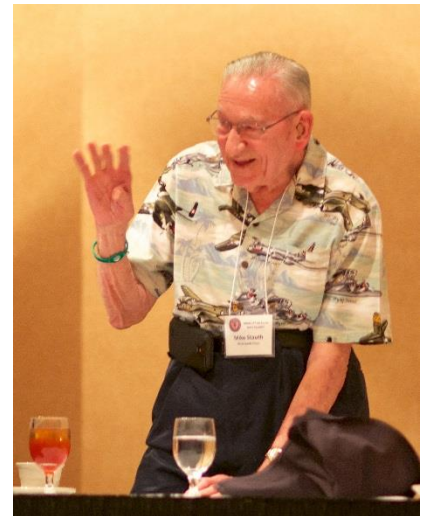
Bobbi Kelly



Ralph Helmericks



A. Mike Stauth



The other three Bomb Groups (The 99<sup>th</sup>, the 301<sup>st</sup> and the 455<sup>th</sup>) greatly contributed to the success of our meeting. Copies of selected pictures from the Reunion are included with this Newsletter. The speaker roster was most impressive, Colonel Tom Kirk who had traveled to Chicago (from Phoenix) for our 2010 Reunion, returned to again present a riveting description of his life as a POW at the Hanoi Hilton for 5 ½ years.

Our keynote speaker for the Gala Saturday Night Banquet, Brigadier General Edwin D. (Dave) Woellner was a B-17 pilot (POW) flying out of England in WWII. He had a long distinguished career with the Air Force before retiring as a Vice Commander.

**SURVIVOR PICTURE**

Joint Reunion 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force Bomb Groups WWII  
17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> October, 2013 Tempe Arizona



Row 1 (Seated Row (L to R)) – 1. Albert Tone 301<sup>st</sup> BG, 2-Peter Polmen 451<sup>st</sup> BG, 3-Ralph Helmericks 451<sup>st</sup> BG, 4-Herbert Guinness 451<sup>st</sup> BG, 5-Frank Finklang 301<sup>st</sup> BG, 6-Win Jones 451<sup>st</sup> BG, 7-Dave Woellner 306<sup>th</sup> BG, 8-Archie Aitcheson 301<sup>st</sup> BG, 9-William Hipple 451<sup>st</sup> BG & 10-Alfred Betcher 99<sup>th</sup> BG

Row 2 (L to R): 1-Achi Kozakis 451<sup>st</sup> BG, 2-Richard Minor 451<sup>st</sup> BG, 3-Earl VanBenschoten 451<sup>st</sup> BG, 4-Ormond Buffington 455<sup>th</sup> BG, 5-Mike Stauth 451<sup>st</sup> BG, 6-Nathan McKinney 451<sup>st</sup> BG, 7-Alex Garcia 451<sup>st</sup> BG, 8-Ed Longenecker 451<sup>st</sup> BG & 9-Verne Mason 451<sup>st</sup> BG

Row 3 (L to R) 1-George Insley 44<sup>th</sup> BG, 2-Willard Gil 451<sup>st</sup> BG, 3-Robert Caldwell 455<sup>th</sup> BG, 4-Milo Sanchez 451<sup>st</sup> BG, 5-Carl Stracka 455<sup>th</sup> BG, 6-Ted Tronoff 455<sup>th</sup> BG, 7-Tom Boyd 455<sup>th</sup> BG, 8-Linn Newman 451<sup>st</sup> BG & 9-Wes Nelson 451<sup>st</sup> BG

Not Pictured: Les Bartlett 98<sup>th</sup> BG, George Johnston 455<sup>th</sup> BG, Jack Miller 451<sup>st</sup> BG, Ryan Michael O'Brien 484<sup>th</sup> BG & Henry Ong Jr. 487<sup>th</sup> BG

**2014 REUNION**

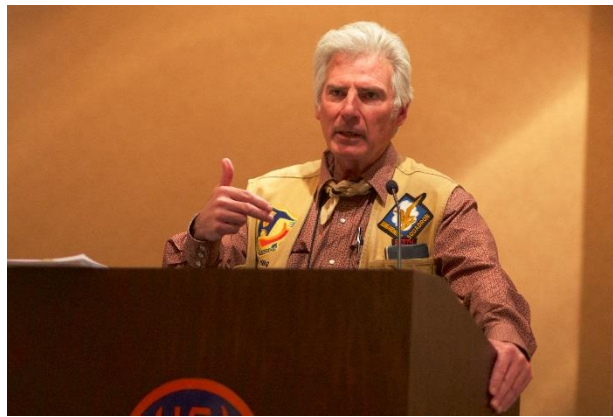
Our 451<sup>st</sup> BG and the 455<sup>th</sup> B.G. have been invited by the 461<sup>st</sup> and the 484<sup>th</sup> Bomb Groups to join them for a Reunion now planned to be held in Oklahoma City, OK, September 18-21, 2014. In many respects, the proposed Reunion program would be quite similar to that of our most recent meetings. Should you have an interest in possibly attending the upcoming Reunion, please promptly notify us. We will not make a final decision on proceeding with this until later. If we decide to participate, Additional information will be available along with Registration Forms on our 2014 Reunion Website <http://www.gordons.ws/reunion2014>

## 2013 REUNION PROGRAM & SPEAKERS

Getting to Italy  
Speaker: Theodore V. Tronoff, Navigator



The Saga of Lady Be Good  
Speaker: Kim Hobbs, President 376<sup>th</sup> B.G.



Maintaining the Aircraft  
Speaker: Nathan McKinney, Line Chief



The Long March, POWS  
Speaker: Henry Ong, Jr., Radioman-Gunner, POW



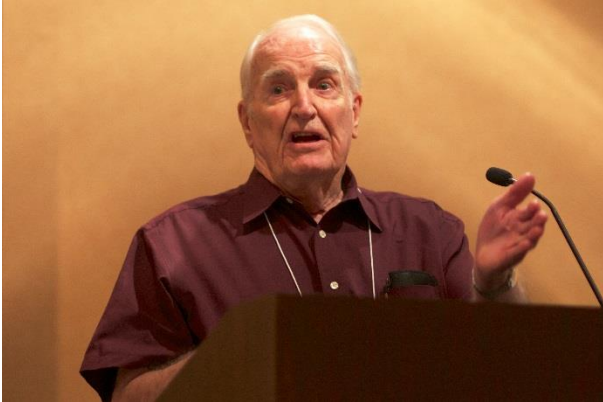
The Story of Patsy Jack  
Speaker: Lt. Colonel Keith E. Bennett



The Markersdorf Airdrome Mission  
Speaker: Winson Jones, Top Turret Gunner



Hazard of Flying that First Mission: Unscheduled  
Sampling of Turkish Hospitality  
Speaker: Linn Newman, Nose Turret Gunner



5 ½ Years at the Hanoi Hilton Prison  
Speaker: Colonel Thomas H. Kirk Jr., Pilot



Keynote Speaker – Brigadier General Edwin D (Dave) Woellner,  
Pilot, POW 306<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group WWII



## TEMPE REUNION HOTEL EXHIBITS

Tempe Reunion. Randy Jones provided our 451<sup>st</sup> impressive collection of murals and other artifacts. Then David Webster and Charles Workman greatly increased our regular exhibit space with an expansive Air War collection that included a machine gun, Norden bomb sight and sundry other items. At the Reunion, Craig Jones (Win's son) presented his dad with a very attractive glass encased B-24 Model which also was placed on display. All in all, the total items for viewing constituted a small Air Force Museum.

**COMMEMORATIVE AIR FORCE MUSEUM TOUR**



Jack & Shirley Miller



Bill Hipple



## Program- Joint Reunion

### 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force Bomb Groups WWII



#### Sponsoring Units:

99<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group



301<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group



451<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group



455<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group



**Reunion Management**

Reunion Manager	— Winson "Big" Jones 451 <sup>st</sup> Bomb Group
Committee	— Gary Staffo 99 <sup>th</sup> Bomb Group
Committee	— Frank Finklang 301 <sup>st</sup> Bomb Group
Committee	— Gregory E. Riggs 455 <sup>th</sup> Bomb Group

**Reunion Staff**

Reunion Support	— Diane Kae Jones
Reunion Support	— Marsha Morris
Reunion Web Master	— Warren Gordon
Photographer	— Michael Smeltzer
Transportation	— David Fisher
Transportation	— Craig Jones
451st B.G. Historian	— Randy Jones
WWII Artifacts	— George Webster

**Arizona Liaison**

Arizona Liberator Group	— David Arnett
Arizona Liberator Group	— Paul Arnett
CAF Museum	— Larry A. Turner
Advisory	— A. Mike Stauch
Advisory	— Roger Fenton

**Special Contributors**

Delcia Bagwell
Louie Lopez
"Achi" Kozakis
"Alex" Kuras
"Gus" Margaritis
Victor E. Murray
Linn W. Newman

**17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>, October 2013**

**Phoenix, Arizona**

**Tempe Embassy Suites Hotel**

#### Thursday Program

##### October 17th, 2013

Free Breakfast Bar .....	7:00am – 9:00am
Registration .....	12:00 noon – 5:00pm
Hotel Manager Free Wine Bar .....	5:00pm – 7:00pm
Crew and Friends Meetings .....	12:00 noon – 7:00pm

#### Friday Day Program

##### October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Free Breakfast Bar .....	7:00am – 9:00am
Registration .....	9:00am – 5:00pm
Bus Tour CAF Museum & Luncheon Group A Departure .....	10:00am
Bus Tour CAF Museum & Luncheon Group B Departure .....	11:00am

#### Friday Evening Program

##### October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Hospitality Hour with Cash Bar .....	5:00pm – 6:00pm
Dinner & Program .....	6:00pm – 9:30pm

- ❖ Opening Remarks - Winson "Big" Jones
- ❖ Introduction of Head Table
- ❖ Recognition of Guests Honoring Deceased Members
- ❖ Recognition of POW Survivors in Attendance
- ❖ Recognition of Survivors in Attendance
- ❖ Sing Along Featuring Burgie Crandall's Lets Dance Band Combo

#### Saturday Morning Program

##### October 19th, 2013

Free Breakfast Bar .....	7:30am – 10:30am
Program .....	10:00am – Noon

Getting to Italy .....	Theodore v. Tronoff, Navigator
The Saga of Lady Be Good .....	Kim Hobbs, President 376 <sup>th</sup> Bomb Group
Maintaining the Aircraft .....	Nathan McKinney, Line Chief
The Long March, POWS .....	Henry Ong, Jr., Radioman-Gunner, POW

#### Saturday Afternoon Program

##### October 19th, 2013

Program .....	2:00pm – 4:00pm
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The Story of Patsy Jack .....	Lt. Colonel Keith E. Bennett
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**Hazards of Flying that First Mission:**

Unscheduled Sampling of Turkish Hospitality .....	Linn Newman, Nose Turret Gunner
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**The Markersdorf Airdrome Mission ....**  
(451<sup>st</sup> B.G. awarded its third Presidential Unit Citation for this mission)

Jack "Little" Jones, Nose Turret Gunner
Winson "Big" Jones, Top Turret Gunner
Paul V. Anderson, Ball Turret Gunner

5 1/2 Years at the Hanoi Hilton Prison ....	Colonel Thomas H. Kirk Jr., Pilot
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#### Saturday Evening Program

##### October 19th, 2013

Hospitality Hour with Cash Bar .....	5:00pm to 6:00pm
Gala Dinner with Big Band Orchestra .....	6:00pm to 10:30pm

#### Dinner and Program

- ❖ Invocation
- ❖ Dinner
- ❖ Color Guard – ASU Air Force ROTC
- ❖ Guest Speaker – Brigadier General Edwin D.(Dave) Woellner
- ❖ Closing Remarks – Winson "Big" Jones
- ❖ Heroes' March – Randy Jones calling Roll
- ❖ Removal of Colors
- ❖ Taps
- ❖ Survivors' Group Picture
- ❖ 8:30pm to 10:30pm - Big Band Music for Dancing and Listening  
 Burgie Crandall's Let's Dance Band. Burgie Crandall Leader and Music Director. Band Managers – Jenny Werner and Chuck Bellman

## DONATIONS

Thank you, thank you, thank you for the generous contributions received since our last Newsletter. We now have sufficient carryover funds to cover the various printing and other costs associated with getting Newsletter No. 3 to you. We also have received donations from the following since Newsletter No 2:

Aarons, Theodore	Horn, Lawrence H.	McNerney, F.P.
Anderson, Charles W.	Jeunette, Edward R. Sr	Miller, John B.
Bowman, David L.	Jodell, John H.	Newman, Linn W
Collins, Kenneth	Kozakis, Achilles	Osofsky, Meyer
Cushner, Stephen S.	Kuras, Alexander	Pendleton, Andrew L.
Dan, Bonnie J.	Latchaw, Arthur	Prince, Susan Tudor
Duncan, Kenneth S.	Longenecker, Edward W.	Shaffer, Rossman
Elliott, Sally & Earle	Lopez, Louie	Stauffer, George
Erickson, Leonard M.	Malone, Paul E.	Tedesco, Frank
Gill, Willard C.	Margaritis, Gus	Therriault, Lawrence E.
Hall, Gail J.		

Special memorials and other designated tributes recently received are as follows:

### Donor

Bagwell, Delcia  
 Goldsmith, Cynthia R.  
 Hill, Sedgefield D.  
 Hill, Sedgefield D.  
 Murray, Victor E.  
 Nelson, Wesley F.  
 Reise, David  
 Rohde, Harry O.  
 Walkey, Cliff

### In Tribute To

John Bagwell Jr.  
 Orville Richey  
 David Eagles  
 A. Mike Stauth  
 455th Bomb Group  
 Crew Members of "Extra Joker"  
 Alvin G. Reise  
 Billy Seale  
 Thomas E. (Edward) Walkey

## DISTRIBUTING THE NEWSLETTER VIA EMAIL

With the passage of time, more and more people are using E-mail as their primary communication vehicle. If you have an E-mail Address kindly send it along. This will serve to reduce the cost of distributing future Newsletters. Also if you are a WWII survivor, please let us know your duty position with the 451<sup>st</sup>.

Send to: Win451BG@gmail.com

**LAST FLY BY**

The following reflects the death notifications received since our July 2013 Newsletter:

<b>451<sup>st</sup> Member</b>	<b>Duty Position</b>	<b>DOD</b>
Adams, Dennis S.	Pilot	10/15/2013
Anderson, Robert J.	Pilot	10/26/2013
Dattan, Howard S.		9/6/2013
Eppestine, Alfred H.	Radio Operator/Gunner	10/5/2013
Humphrey, Winston E.	Co-pilot	05/2013
Kuchinsky, Joseph Jr.	Flight Engineer/Gunner	3/6/2013
Merklein, Robert Jr.		9/11/2012
O'Connor, John Alexander	Pilot	5/28/2013
Richey, Orville W.		5/8/2013
Rogers, Lawrence	Flight Engineer/Gunner	5/25/2013
Seale, Billy B.	Flight Engineer/Top Turret Gunner	05/2013
Young, Sherman S.		

**JOHN O'CONNOR**

Our Last Fly By includes the passing of John O' Connor who until recently was a very special contributor to our Reunion programs.

John was an accomplished trumpet player and musician. He often would join various bands and orchestras that were providing music for our meetings. As a pilot, he had a distinguished career with the 451<sup>st</sup>. In a subsequent Newsletter, perhaps we can include more information regarding John's wartime experiences.

**JACKETS**

Yes, we now have two jackets. The second having been contributed by Margaret Kacena and her family. It had been worn by her late husband, Bob Kacena, who served as a lead navigator with the 451<sup>st</sup>.

At our Tempe Reunion, we honored Wilma Bennett and her family members. Additionally; her son Lt. Colonel Keith E. Bennett made an excellent presentation covering the B-24 "Patsy Jack" and its crew members.

**DISTINGUISHED MILITARY SERVICE OF 451<sup>ST</sup> ALUMNAE MEMBERS**

For most, upon completing our 35 missions, we returned to the States and re-entered civilian life. However, there were quite a number of 451<sup>st</sup> members that continued with military duty. For example, Jack Miller served in Vietnam where he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.



Once Paul E. Malone, Co-Pilot of the original Patsy Jack crew completed his bombing missions, he volunteered to continue his air force career in Europe where he flew 42 missions as a P-51 fighter pilot.

In the case of Alexander C. Kuras, navigator, the following summary reflects an extensive post WWII career involving many facets of military operations.

Many of the 451<sup>st</sup> members returned to the US and later were involved with the Korean and/or the Vietnam Wars. In a few words, I joined the 426<sup>th</sup> as navigator in November 1944. My many memories of the B-24 include; bellying in a B-24 four miles off the end of the runway at Pueblo CO (co-pilot error); flying with many different crews due to a navigator shortage; surviving 33 missions and the heavy flak; emergency landing at Vis with double engine failure; losing an engine over Vienna and coming home alone – thank God for the P-51 escort; a bad flak hit over Vienna, killed the ball gunner and caused #4 engine to lose oil and run away (wouldn't feather) – just made an emergency field in Northern Italy; and landing at an abandoned airfield due to fuel shortage. And the great joy of surviving and flying home in our B-24 in May of 45.

The war being over I took advantage of the GI bill and earned a BS in Electrical Engineering. I also joined the AF Troop Carrier Reserve Squadron at O'Hare Field. Recalled in March 51, flew air rescue with the SAC survival school for four years and then assigned to R&D work. This includes B-52 R&D weapons drops – logged about 50 hours in B-52s. Spent five years on the Gemini program at Cape Canaveral – launch operations of astronauts where I met many who landed on the moon.

With the completion of the Gemini Program I attended a training with Industry Course at McDonnell Corp, St Louis as a prelude, I thought, to joining other Gemini officers on the Manned Orbital Program at Vandenberg AFB (which was later cancelled). Instead orders were to Vietnam, this was July 1968. After some preliminary training and upgrading to flying status Code 1 from Code 3 (which required no flying), I had orders to Manchester NH where they modified 25 year old C-47s into EC-47s. This included adding a Doppler navigation system, B-3 driftmeter and special electronic surveillance equipment.

The mission was to eavesdrop on enemy communications and fix their position to within a few hundred yards which required extremely accurate navigation. The crew of the EC-47 included two pilots, a navigator and three security system operators who knew the Vietnamese language. They were trained to determine which sites to fix and then the navigator would fix the location and he would call it down to ground stations over secure communications for further action. It was a navigator's mission and he required a higher security clearance than the pilots.

Getting to Vietnam was an adventure. We were to ferry an EC-47 to Saigon (TSN). The two pilots, both LCol, one a history prof at the AF Academy, myself, also now a LCOL and a very young junior flight mechanic made up the crew, which the officers having 20 plus years of service and thousands of hours of flight time. Compare this with the 451<sup>st</sup> crews who ferried B-24s to Italy where at most there might be a 1<sup>st</sup> lieutenant on the crew.

Not having the range to get to Hawaii even with a 500 gallon cabin tank, our route was NH to CO, CA, McCord AFB Wash, Anchorage, the Aleutian Islands, Midway, Guam, Philippines, Saigon. At 150 mph we logged 82 hours in the air.

One exciting event half way between Mid-Way and Guam, #2 engine lost power. After quickly identifying a course to the nearest field about three hours away, I check the pilot's instruments and noted the fuel pressure to the engine was only half what it should have been. My past experience with cabin tanks told me to go back and check for problems such as loose connections. The tank had two standard, four position selector valves, one per engine. The valves at that time should have been off, but the flight engineer apparently without double checking put one OFF and second one to BOTH. As the wing tank gas dropped, this allowed air into the pump system and engine failure. Closing the valve cured the engine failure and 10 minutes later the second engine failed. They bellied the plane on a beach in Canada most likely due to ferry tank problems. We likely were in the same danger.

The 360 TW Sq. had 30 flight crews and 15 aircraft. Flying was intense, averaging 150 hours per aircraft, about 80 per crew each month. Since I was the ranking navigator, I had the responsibility over the 30 navigators who were majors, captains, lieutenants, many from previous desk jobs.

The aircrews were overloaded with rank from those recalled from desk jobs. We had numbers LCOLs, Majors, and Captains with thousands of hours of flight time. This vast experience level was noteworthy in minimal mistakes. The few lieutenant pilots needed 500 hours with the squadron to move to the left seat. This contrasts with the 451<sup>st</sup> where 500 hours of flight time might be met at completion of a tour. The 451<sup>st</sup> folks had to learn quickly and some mistakes occurred. Also the war pressures were not as great in Saigon.

The missions covered the southern part of Vietnam, usually within 150 miles of TSN. The airfield at the time was the busiest airport in the world so activity was intense. Most missions kept the navigator very busy, often there wasn't time to even eat a sandwich. Missions were flown day and night and usually lasted five to six hours, which was the fuel limit since the EC-47 was heavily loaded with crew and equipment and couldn't carry a full fuel load due to weight restrictions.

The only enemy action was occasional small arms fire, which at 3500 feet altitude was ineffective. We did have a front line seat for some action. We were given notice of B-52 drops so as to avoid the drop zone. I would position our aircraft about four miles from the drop site and watch the spectacular action of 3 B-52s with each dropping about 40,000 pounds of bombs from 30,000 feet. Remember a flight of nine B-24s would drop about what on B-52 dropped, and they came from Guam. Also at night we also had a side show when gunships opened up.

Aircraft maintenance, even on 25 year old aircraft was superb. As engine outage or a maintenance scrub was unheard of. Morale of the crews and ground personnel was excellent. The one year tour limit worked well.

We arrived well after the Tet offensive where TSN had about 400 casualties. The base and Saigon were quite safe. We even bicycled into Saigon. Being a permanent base, quarters and food were good. Unlike the F-105s and B-52s that bombed the north, our mission was quite safe. In the years time I logged 1000 hours, the squadron had no casualties and had no aircraft accidents. I

celebrated my 45<sup>th</sup> birthday at the rooftop restaurant on top of the REX Hotel (military run) in Saigon. Overall a production and exciting tour.

Alex Kuras

## LOOKING FOR INFORMATION

From time-to-time, we receive a variety of contact requests related to 451<sup>st</sup> bomb group members. Some of the requests are from family members hoping to gain some insight on their relative's war experiences. In other cases, friends are trying to locate a 451<sup>st</sup> member and don't have a way to contact them (and they aren't on our mailing list). If you can help provide information or make connections, please directly contact the person searching listed below:

<b>451<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group Member</b>	<b>Family or Friend Searching</b>
Carey, William F. Private, Possibly Office Staff (Close friend of James Plarenos)	Mar Gee Farr – Friend P.O. Box 7272 Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92067-7272 Phone 630.624.6634
Haldeman, John M. Bombardier 724 <sup>th</sup> Squadron	John Haldeman – Son 508.481.2494
Hice, Joseph John	Gary Hice – Son garyhice@gmail.com
Notestone, Edwin Flight Engineer/Gunner 724 <sup>th</sup> Squadron	Damon B. Notestone – Son 107 Terrace Ct. Lancaster, OH 43130
Pryzblinski, Lawrence PFC Ordinance Dept. 726 <sup>th</sup> Squadron	Thomas Pryzblinski – Son pryzzie@comcast.net

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